

# Zionism's Frontier Legacies: Colonial Masculinity and the American Council for Judaism in San Francisco

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In 2011, San Francisco's Contemporary Jewish Museum curated an exhibit called *California Dreaming: Jewish Life in the Bay Area from the Gold Rush to the Present*. The ambitious exhibit illustrated the specific regional history of San Francisco's Jewish community. Arranged chronologically, most of the exhibit focused on the successes of Jewish families in San Francisco and the origin of major Jewish organizations—until the exhibit reached the end of World War II. Instead of celebrating the end of the Holocaust, the exhibit instead needed to contend with the American Council for Judaism (ACJ), a Jewish anti-Zionist organization whose strongest chapter was in San Francisco. The wall text of the exhibit explains the ACJ's popularity as a reflection of “local comfort,” in that “the Jewish elite of San Francisco, who experienced very little anti-Semitism and held many public offices, found it difficult to imagine the dangers encountered by Jews in Europe or even in American cities that were less welcoming toward Jews.”<sup>1</sup> The strength of San Francisco's anti-Zionism was glossed over as a temporary aberration:

With news of the Holocaust, the tenor of the local conversation changed. By the time the state of Israel was established in 1948, many ACJ leaders had come to regret their earlier positions, recognizing that the situation in the Bay Area was like no

other community and that there was an urgent need for a Jewish state, especially for the Jewish refugees of Europe.<sup>2</sup>

The museum's analysis of Jewish anti-Zionism in 1940s San Francisco assumes several things about the relationship between Zionism, Jewish identity, and assimilation, namely, that Zionism is a global, populist movement, responding to an "urgent need for a Jewish state," and that anti-Zionism must therefore be a result of assimilation, "comfort," financial success, and a kind of provincialism—an inability to see beyond the success of Jews in the San Francisco Bay area.

This article pushes against the assumption that American Zionism and American anti-Zionism are mutually exclusive political ideologies and, particularly, that Zionism emerged in the United States as an alternative to Jewish assimilation. Rather, by examining the public statements of the San Francisco chapter of the American Council for Judaism, it argues that *both* Zionism and anti-Zionism in the United States took up the project of assimilation and Jewish normalcy. As uniquely American political movements, both worked to situate American Jews within US racial liberal capitalism. In 1940s California, American Zionism and American Jewish anti-Zionism shared similar ideals and discursive formulations, albeit while arguing for radically different positions regarding the role of the state of Israel in American Jewish life.

The American Council for Judaism was founded in 1942 and quickly became the largest Jewish anti-Zionist organization in the United States. Rather than see the ACJ as a precursor to the present-day anti-Zionist movements, I analyze the organization's attempts to resist Zionism by defining Jewish American identity through normative discourses of proper American colonial masculinity. The political project of the ACJ did not contest the dominant racial-capitalist order and in fact explicitly supported the supremacy of the United States. The ACJ touted Jewish capitalist success as evidence of US democracy and advocated for a uniquely American Judaism. Rather than dismiss the ACJ as assimilationist, however, I will situate their political position in the context of American Zionism's dominance and, in doing so, question the grounds for "assimilation" itself. The interplay between Zionism and the arguments of the ACJ reveals much about the complexity of belonging—or assimilating—in the postwar US urban landscape. Both the ACJ and the dominant Zionist organizations of the time were preoccupied with what made a "normal" Jewish life. As David Biale, Daniel Boyarin, Raz Yosef, and Todd Samuel Presner note, the boundaries of Jewish normalcy at this time were intimately connected to properly embodied masculinity.<sup>3</sup> The descriptions of the "Jewish problem," for anti-Semites, Zionists, and anti-Zionists alike, were spoken in the language of degeneracy and a failure to possess the proper (Christian, American, or European) masculinity. However, the myth of pioneer masculinity was not exclusive to the Zionist project but was equally important to anti-Zionist Jewish American identity.

I begin this article by outlining the ways the American Council for Judaism approached the Zionist landscape of San Francisco in the 1940s via their print culture and, in particular, in the articles and advertisements circulated in the San Francisco Jewish press. Using Jodi Melamed's concept of "racial liberalism," I examine the ways the ACJ fashioned American Jews as productive, valuable, and successful, primarily through the relationship between Californian Jews and the land. Through an analysis of public speeches made by prominent members of the ACJ, I argue that the ACJ's vision for Californian Jews has much in common with the Zionist mythology of "making the desert bloom." An analysis of Rabbi Morris Lazaron's speech to the ACJ outlines the ways the ACJ saw Zionism as a weakness in the Jewish psyche and called for cosmopolitanism to serve as an alternative to Jewish nationalism. Rather than a call for a kind of global humanism, cosmopolitanism in this instance served as a code for the dominance of the United States in emerging forms of commercial globalization. I use Michel Foucault, in particular, to rethink Kantian cosmopolitanism as a political philosophy that can imagine a peaceful world only via global market forces. This is essential to understanding the ACJ's political rhetoric and public statements: American Jews became quintessentially American through their financial success, and as an extension, any kind of "global" Jewish identity was rooted in capitalism, not nationalism. Through a close examination of the public statements that the San Francisco Chapter of the American Council for Judaism (SF-ACJ) produced, I argue that this cosmopolitan American Judaism must be based in and rely on capitalism—and capitalist accumulation—in order to function. This is particularly true in the Cold War, postwar milieu in which this public relations campaign functioned.

While I argue that the ACJ was committed to US global dominance and a uniquely American Jewish identity, I do not argue that these commitments make Jewish anti-Zionism in this period more assimilationist than American (or European) Zionism. I turn to the work of David Biale and Daniel Boyarin to argue that Zionism was equally concerned with assimilation and normalcy, and European Zionist thinkers were particularly anxious on behalf of Jewish men. I point to writings by Dorothy Thompson and Yitzhak Rabin to show that this kind of assimilation was equally a concern for American Zionism. While the ACJ offers a counternarrative to the one of Zionist rescue through an emphasis on normality, the ACJ does not challenge the underlying mythology of proper masculinity and erotic liberation.

### **The American Council for Judaism and San Francisco's Zionism**

The 1942 formation of the American Council for Judaism was inspired by two events that changed the political project of American Judaism. The first was an American Zionist conference at the Hotel Biltmore in New York, which approved a declaration that named a Jewish "commonwealth" in Palestine as

the American Zionist movement's ultimate goal.<sup>4</sup> That same year, the Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR) met in Cincinnati and voted to establish a Jewish army to fight alongside the Allies. The CCAR was the central organization for Reform rabbis in the United States, and since 1937 it had maintained a neutral position on Zionism.<sup>5</sup> The CCAR vote marked, more than ever, a shift within American Reform Judaism. Up until this point, there had not been an open declaration in support of Zionist aims; many Reform rabbis saw Zionism as antithetical to the principles of Classical Reform Judaism outlined in the 1885 "Pittsburg Platform." Drawn up at a meeting of Reform rabbis at the Concordia Club in Pittsburg, Pennsylvania, it called for Jews to "modernize" Jewish practices. Modernization rejected all religious laws that "are not adapted to the views and habits of modern civilization," including laws that regulated diet and dress. The document established respect for Islam and Christianity as "daughter" religions of Judaism and, indeed, "recognize[d] in every religion an attempt to grasp the infinite," but asserted Judaism as presenting the "highest conception of the God idea." Finally, the platform marked a theological departure from the "Jewish nation": "We consider ourselves no longer a nation, but a religious community, and therefore expect neither a return to Palestine, nor a sacrificial worship under the sons of Aaron, nor the restoration of any of the laws concerning the Jewish state."<sup>6</sup>

The Platform defined the basic tenets of Reform Judaism until 1937. Therefore, the vote for a Jewish army in 1942 marked a radical departure from a uniquely US American Jewish theology. Thomas Kolsky's history of the ACJ cites this as the inspiration for the first meeting of what would eventually turn into the American Council for Judaism: a group of twenty-six "dissident" rabbis who saw Zionism as a threat to American Classical Reform Judaism.<sup>7</sup> In August 1943, the ACJ published an official statement, which gave theological weight to the struggle against the formation of a Jewish state. Echoing the Pittsburg Platform, the "Digest of Principles" stressed religion as the "basis of unity" among Jews and defined nationality as the "countries in which [Jews] live and those lands their homelands." The Statement unequivocally deemphasized Palestine as a national homeland for the Jewish people, instead linking the hope of a Jewish future there to the establishment of a democratic government, "in which Jews, Moslems and Christians shall be justly represented." The Digest also reiterated the "universal" message of Judaism and claimed that the Jewish diaspora was an opportunity to spread this "truth." By the end of 1943, however, the ACJ's direct opposition to "the effort to establish a Jewish National State in Palestine or elsewhere, and its corollary, a Jewish Army," alongside its opposition to "all philosophies that stress the racialism, the nationalism and homelessness of the Jews" shifted the focus from a religious to a primarily political opposition to Zionism.<sup>8</sup> The previous critique of Zionism—that establishing a Jewish army went against Reform Judaism's theology—was supplanted by international law and by the political project of "normalizing Jewish existence in whatever countries Jews lived."<sup>9</sup>

The popularity of the ACJ's theological and political opposition to Zionism in San Francisco has much to do with San Francisco's rich Jewish history. Jewish communities had been a part of the city since the Gold Rush and organized themselves through benevolent societies, foundations, and the long-running Jewish weekly.<sup>10</sup> The city itself shaped Jewish theology and practices. In 1901, for example, Temple Sherith Israel, one of San Francisco's first synagogues, commissioned a large stained glass window depicting Moses giving the Ten Commandments to Israel in Yosemite, with the Half-Dome in the background.<sup>11</sup> The centrality of the city to Jewish life led Julius Kahn, who represented San Francisco in Congress, to claim that "For me the United States is my Zion and San Francisco is my Jerusalem." Jacob Voorsanger's legacy of Classical Reform, "modernized" American Judaism was still dominant in San Francisco by World War II. In March 1942, the *Emanu-El and the Jewish Journal's* Passover cover portrayed Roosevelt guided by Moses through the parting Red Sea, holding a copy of the "Four Freedoms," with Hitler, Mussolini, and Hirohito drowning beneath him. This image interprets the war from a US American perspective rather than from a strictly (global) Jewish one.

Regardless of the Reform movement's popularity, by 1943 Zionism had more or less established itself as the hegemonic understanding of Jewish identity in San Francisco. The San Francisco chapter of the ACJ formed in November 1943.<sup>12</sup> By 1945, the SF chapter made up one-third of the ACJ's national enrollment.<sup>13</sup> Declaring their opposition to "the effort to establish a national Jewish State in Palestine or anywhere else," their regional chair was Dr. Monroe E. Deutsch, vice president and provost of the University of California. They declared themselves "opposed to a Jewish Army" and critiqued the effort to establish the state as undergirded by "a philosophy of defeatism."<sup>14</sup> The SF-ACJ articulated their ideology through public pamphlets, speeches, and advertisements that circulated in San Francisco during the 1940s. This ideology connects to broader understandings of Jewish masculinity that functioned to normalize Jewishness and insert Jews into a global capitalist world order that emerged with World War II and ensured US American ascendancy. Neither the ACJ nor US Zionists contested this postwar social organization. After a November 8, 1943 article in the *San Francisco Chronicle* outlined the political philosophy of the ACJ, the responses from the Jewish community were vociferous. At that point, the Jewish weekly had changed hands and was titled the *Jewish Community Bulletin*. In a letter to the editor on November 16, Sidney Rochlin was skeptical of the ACJ's democratic aims, instead charging their critique of the CCAR vote with "trying to destroy the effects of the democratically elected" CCAR. He criticized the ACJ as "a small but wealthy economic bloc hiding behind a religious facade" whose purpose was to "waylay the Zionist organization and destroy the Zionist aspiration of the crushed European Jewry."<sup>15</sup> Rochlin's image of a wealthy elite threatened by Zionism's populism was more clearly stated two days later, when Dr. Paul Ucker's letter to the editor in the *Chronicle* called the ACJ a "corporation" whose members consisted of "a small group

of (financially) outstanding Jews.” Their office was a “business headquarters” where “they try to fight an internationally recognized Jewish mass movement of political and economic as well as social and cultural importance.”<sup>16</sup> Rochlin and Ucker characterize the ACJ as suppressive “Grand Moguls of Judaism” and Zionism as a people’s movement. The ACJ, then, was portrayed as an elite cadre of anti-Zionists whose corporate business interests were threatened by a mass movement, a portrayal that persisted in the San Francisco Contemporary Jewish Museum’s 2011 exhibit. The ACJ’s members were, indeed, part of the “first families” of San Francisco: owning class, successful Jewish families whose capital investments shaped the city.<sup>17</sup> However, a closer examination of the Jewish print culture of the 1940s shows that even though the members of the SF-ACJ included extremely influential barons and bankers, the major financial institutions and Jewish cultural discourses were in support of Zionism and the Jewish state.

The Jewish weeklies in 1940s San Francisco show that Zionism had a strong, public presence in the Jewish community and that Zionist organizations were deeply committed to garnering financial support from American Jews.<sup>18</sup> When the *Emanu-El* became the *Jewish Community Bulletin* in 1943, gone were the weekly columns by Bay area rabbis, and the paper added an expanded news section and society pages. Nearly all of the *Jewish Community Bulletin* was dedicated to covering the State of Israel by 1948. Each week showcased an ad for the United Jewish Appeal (UJA) that asked San Francisco Jews for donations—to “buy the freedom of a people”—to help Jews in refugee camps move to Israel.<sup>19</sup> The ads depicted wounded soldiers, crying children, and outstretched hands and worked to raise 250 million dollars for the “Destiny Campaign.”<sup>20</sup> The paper also ran ads by the San Francisco *Histadrut*, an Israeli organization that secured employment for new immigrants to Israel. Finally, in September 1948, the paper began a series of articles urging the San Francisco Jewish community to donate blood to Israel, including a coupon that one could use to donate money if they could not donate blood.

Zionism in San Francisco participated heavily in marketing: Zionist advertisements and programming connected financial capital with narratives of rescue. In direct contradiction to claims of class warfare couched in a Zionist uprising, the paper ran two large features about investment opportunities in Israel. The first was “the first major commercial transaction between an American bank and an Israeli corporation” when the Bank of America, San Francisco, underwrote a 15 million dollar loan for the purchase of land in Israel.<sup>21</sup> Bank of America’s founder, San Francisco local A.-P. Giannini, approved the loan before his death, as the “last important piece of business” after many New York banks refused the loan.<sup>22</sup> At the same time, the paper announced that Bank of America was “contemplating opening a branch in Israel to handle Middle Eastern business.” As the first major loan of a “non-governmental, non-charitable nature,” the San Francisco chapter of the Jewish National Fund was careful to point out that the fundraising drive needed to continue, since the loan “actually

represents only an advance against funds which are still vitally necessary.”<sup>23</sup> A month later, the paper reported on a surge in building in Israel because of a new enterprise, the Israel Corporation of America. The corporation, which boasted involvement from several prominent San Francisco Zionists, aimed to promote “the economic development in Israel through private investments.”<sup>24</sup> Finally, the paper reported on the “San Francisco Village,” a settlement in the Israeli desert to be established through the Jewish National Fund. These financial movements signify the importance of global capitalism to the establishment of the State of Israel, contradicting the Zionist mythology of Israel as a socialist, farmer-centered utopia. The State of Israel’s existence relied on corporate finance and capitalist infrastructure, alongside a mass shift in Jewish American identity. As David Shpiro states, the early-twentieth-century donations to Jewish settlements in Palestine from American Jews “blunt[ed] the difference between ‘political Zionism’ and ‘philanthropic humanitarianism.’”<sup>25</sup> World War II and its enduring traumas blunted this difference even further. *The Jewish Community Bulletin*’s Zionist advertisements, opinion pages, and news columns consistently focused on the need for the Jewish war refugees to be able to live comfortably in Israel and in turn, the need for donations.

The “Destiny Campaign,” a joint effort between the Jewish Welfare Fund and the United Jewish Appeal, worked to raise 25 million dollars for the new Jewish state in the spring of 1948. The UJA ran a weekly ad series in *The Jewish Community Bulletin* imploring San Francisco Jews to donate to the campaign, using both US American discourses of independence and Zionist narratives of rescue. A mere two months before the British withdrew on May 19 and President Truman’s formal recognition of the country, the ads were already iterating Israel’s independence as David triumphing over Goliath. On March 19, 1948, the ads reminded *The Jewish Community Bulletin*’s audience that “You cannot bring back ... last year’s dead” and therefore “You cannot give ... on last year’s basis.” Anticipating the resistance to more donations, the ad points out, “The pioneers, at watch in the parched lands of the Negev, do not complain: ‘we had our fill of dust and danger last year.’” The ad situated American Jews as allies to the emerging State of Israel by comparing them to France’s role in American Independence, stating: “There was a day in 1776 when our young republic tottered. France voted 19 million francs to save the light of freedom in the new world.” The ad mentions Haym Salomon, calling him a “giver” who “answered the call of history.”<sup>26</sup> Now the “roll-call of history is being answered proudly on every ambushed road, in every beleaguered village of Palestine. The roll call now sounds for the Jews of America. The givers, too, have their part.” The UJA ad campaign sees US American Jews as primarily financial backers, rather than the fighters or pioneers, of the Zionist cause. The ads work hard to make this role seem as glamorous and as essential as the romanticized version of the “warriors.” In an ad on April 5, 1948, titled “Where’s Daddy?” the “Jews of America” address a crying baby, telling him that “we” will take on a paternal, providing role while “your father” fights a war “for you.” In the ad, the dona-



tions take on a historic role: “We’ll give, give, give! We’ll give not only in charity’s name: we’ll give as big as the cause, because this time we are making history with our dollars.” Finally, on April 30, 1948, the ads began to iterate the longstanding narrative of the persecuted Jewish nation, describing an “unarmed Jewish settlement” “besieged by hundreds of Arabs.” In the description of the fighting, the ad claims, “the courageous Jewish people are fighting *even with stones* for the homeland that was voted to them by the United Nations” (emphasis in original).<sup>27</sup>

It was in this context that the American Council for Judaism ran a series of ads in the fall of 1949. In an advertisement that ran in *The Jewish Community Bulletin* on October 7, 1949, the ACJ attempted to counter the claim Zionists had over American Jewish children. The ad showcased a Boy Scout playing the trumpet in front of an American flag, with the words “Think it Over!” On one side of the ad, under the title “Zionists Say,” quotes from Israeli Prime Minister David Ben Gurion state that the next task of Zionism was to “bring all Jews to Israel” and that he “appeal[s] chiefly to the youth in the United States and in other countries to help us achieve this big mission. We appeal to the parents to help us bring their children here. Even if they decline to help, we will bring the youth to Israel, but I hope this will not be necessary.” The ad also quoted Daniel Frisch, president of the Zionist Organization of America, saying that the “contribution of American Jewry” should not be “measured in dollars alone,” but that rather “We ought to be able to send to Israel American-bred young people who want to live as Jews—minus the hyphen—under the smiling skies of the reborn Israel.”

The ACJ addresses the ad to “son” and reads like an advertisement for the United States itself, referencing US nationalism, capitalism, and position in global politics. They tell this fictional youth “This land is YOUR land, this flag is YOUR flag.” The ad imagines a collective joy when one engages in American nationalism: “Son, that thrill you feel when you salute the stars and stripes, when you sing ‘The Star Spangled Banner’ is shared by all of your 149,000,000 fellow Americans.” The reference to American freedom in “Freedom of speech, freedom of worship, freedom of thought” is intimately connected to American capitalism and exploitable natural resources: “the right to work at the job of your choice—to travel or live where you please in this miracle land of 48 states of breathless beauty and boundless opportunity.” In a direct critique of Zionism, the ad uses the language of settler-colonialism, much like Zionism did, to tell its audience that they have “the grandest birthright on earth.”

The ad ends with a call for American Jewish youth to think of the future and their role as Jews in a particular American postwar culture: “This is your country, your homeland, your land of promise. Sure, it’s not perfect, but it’s not finished yet. That’s part of your job—our job—all together, Jews, Catholics, Protestants.” The ACJ wanted American Jews to participate in the postwar optimism and religious pluralism—the ad ends with a patriotic call to “honor your flag” and “honor your faith,” to build life on “God and Country.” A summary



of the ACJ's principles appears at the bottom of all four ads run in the *Jewish Community Bulletin* that year. They are for a "virile American Judaism," for the "maximum participation" of American Jews in American democracy, and for "philanthropic aid to our co-religionists and to suffering humanity everywhere."

In many ways, the ACJ defined themselves in opposition to Zionism in these ads without producing a compelling counter-mythology for American Jews. When they opposed themselves to Zionism, they did so using similar narratives about Jewish masculinity as Zionism did (and does). While rejecting Zionism, they seem to be implicitly arguing for one of Zionism's mythologies: that Jews needed a heterosexual, "virile" masculinity. In this particular ad, instead of the soldier/pioneer, a prototypical postwar American masculinity situates American Judaism as an essential part of the United States. They argue in this ad that American Jews can participate in the colonial expansion and exploitation of US territories and in the Boy Scouts' civic duty and patriotism. Further, they imagine Jewish participation in what Jodi Melamed has termed "racial liberalism": the racial order that took root in the 1940s and 1950s as an "official antiracism" that saw racism as "prejudice" and solved the problems of racism by "releas[ing] liberal freedoms" from race through "equal opportunity, possessive individualism and cultural citizenship."<sup>28</sup> Racial liberalism, according to Melamed, was both the precursor to the neo/liberal multiculturalisms of later decades and a "new worldwide racial project, a formally antiracist, liberal-capitalist modernity that revises, partners with, and exceeds the capacities of white supremacy without replacing or ending it."<sup>29</sup> While Melamed does not include Jewish integration into her analysis, her "racial liberalism" is useful for understanding the ways the ACJ conceived their responsibilities for a postwar racial harmony. The ACJ saw themselves as educators, working to create a "more perfect union," as their ad claims.

The ad reestablishes the separation between "religious devotion to Judaism" and "national ties to Israel." It also denies that there is "a voice—any voice in America—speaking for all Jews, either as a political, religious, economic or social entity." Finally, the ad decries the "domination of American Jewish institutions, philanthropic or otherwise, by zealots for Jewish political nationalism." This statement is integral to understanding the political project of the American Council for Judaism. They were never anti-Israel, even supporting the State's establishment at times, and they always reinforced the right of Jews to live in Israel. But they were unapologetically *anti-Zionist*. They saw Zionism become the default political position of the Jewish institutions in the Bay area, while simultaneously taking over American Jewish identity. Zionism called for a unified Jewish voice, and Zionists spoke on behalf of Jews in areas of the state and in public life. Zionism saw American Jews as part of Israel's imagined community. Essentially, Zionism made American Jews satellite Israelis, and the ACJ saw this as a direct threat to Jews' position in the United States.<sup>30</sup>

It becomes apparent that nearly all the larger Jewish organizations during this period are concerned with integration and assimilation, whether Zionist or anti-Zionist. The deeply negative response to the ad indicates that nearly every group is grappling with belonging in a postwar United States and the attendant racial liberalism. On November 14, 1949, the *Jewish Community Bulletin* ran an article asking “all groups to stop public controversy.” The article included quotes from leaders of the Zionist Organization of America and the ACJ, each claiming their patriotism and their fulfillment of American ideals and aspirations through their political actions. Both the ACJ and the Zionist movement are attempts to enter into modernity and become part of the post-war world and the structures that inhabit it—global capitalism, properly regulated sexuality, and international law.

### **Making the Desert Bloom: Walter Newman and the California Centennial**

Jodi Melamed argues that “racial liberalism,” as the first official antiracism in the United States, “first entered US governmentality during the early Cold War specifically as a geopolitical racial project that associated Americanism with the benefits of capitalism.”<sup>31</sup> This was extremely apparent within the story the SF-ACJ told about the role of Jews in California, a story that also illustrates the ways American Zionism and American Jewish anti-Zionism were both constituted by similar ideologies. As we saw in the letters to the editor of the *San Francisco Chronicle*, San Francisco Zionists saw the ACJ as cynically protecting business interests and explained Jewish anti-Zionism’s existence as the outgrowth of an economic elite. This constructed an opposition between the capitalist, anti-Zionist ACJ and Zionism as a “people’s movement.” Zionism’s associations with socialism via the *kibbutz* only strengthened this opposition, particularly in the Bay area.<sup>32</sup> Rather than see the opposition between Zionism and anti-Zionism as self-evident, this article contests the interpretation of Zionism as a people’s movement and argues that in fact both the ACJ and the Zionism of the period were invested in capitalism and corporate economic success.

In the United States, the racialized association of capitalism with American nationalism produces success as a moral virtue and as an indicator of liberty, social inclusion, and protection from violence. Amy Kaplan’s *Anarchy of Empire* shows how these ideas find their genealogical roots in US imperialism.<sup>33</sup> Rather than define imperialism as a “one way imposition of power in distant colonies,” Kaplan argues that the very idea of “nation as home” is “inextricable from the political, economic, and cultural movements of empire.” Kaplan points out that imperial relations are fraught with contradictions, namely, “the pursuit of imperial desire risked absorbing aliens into the domestic sphere, and the resulting racial and cultural intermixing threatened ultimately to make the United States internally foreign to itself.”<sup>34</sup> In other words, imperialism threatened democracy both by disrupting the “unity of the nation” through the “incorporation

of alien races” and by potentially turning the republic into a “tyrannical empire.”<sup>35</sup> These fears and anxieties were produced, controlled, and managed by the twin cultural processes of racialization and assimilation. These processes were deeply imbricated in the formation of California as the apex of “manifest destiny” and specifically as a frontier space.<sup>36</sup> California’s frontier legacy meant that the movements of empire explicitly and continually constitute the idea of a national homeland within the formation of “California” as a place-name for a discourse of social and economic freedom. Discursively, in order to claim US America as home, the SF-ACJ needed to participate in the “political, economic, and cultural movements of US empire” and specifically as Californians.

The SF-ACJ held a symposium commemorating the California’s Centennial in 1949 reflecting on the century of Jewish history in San Francisco, in particular boomtown San Francisco and the founding of California. They published a collection of the speeches, intended to emphasize the role of Jews in California’s development. The publication implicitly critiques Zionism by celebrating California as a space of freedom and democracy, where “each of us, regardless of faith, color, or creed has an equal and full opportunity to make his maximum contribution as an American to the welfare and life of our country.” Democracy, then, is defined as an “opportunity” to make a “contribution,” not as a question of representation or voice. The language of “contribution” is partially inferring the formation of an American communal identity, but also codes democratic participation in the language of money. This is an economic reading of democracy. The publication tries to confine the nationalism of Israel to “the boundaries of that state.” “Democracy,” then, functions as a barb against the concept of a “Jewish state,” in that the “opportunity” the United States offers allows Jews to fulfill the “true values” of democracy.<sup>37</sup>

If we look at the histories of Californian Jews as articulated in the Centennial, we see that they interpreted anti-Zionism as a way to fully include Jews into the histories of California as a frontier space, as the apex of Manifest Destiny, and as a US American racial capitalism. In other words, Jews are *valuable*, because they are good capitalists; they contribute to the economy and the histories of land acquisition in California. Melamed’s analysis of racial capitalism in *Represent and Destroy* argues that the idea of a “productive citizen” formed racial liberalism, in that “the possibility of overcoming racism” is limited to “the mechanisms of US-led global capitalism.”<sup>38</sup> Melamed argues “white supremacy allowed for an overarching and unequal system of capital accumulation by inscribing race on bodies as a marker of their relative value or valuelessness.”<sup>39</sup> In other words, individuals were assigned value through racial formation.

This is especially resonant in the first speech reproduced in the ACJ’s commemorative pamphlet, “On Agriculture,” written by S. Walter Newman. Walter Newman was the son of Simon Newman, founder of Newman, California, and of the Newman Corporation, a giant dairy agribusiness. In his speech, he situates Jewish history within the colonial history of San Francisco. He starts off with the prototypical myth of the entrepreneur: migrants in mining towns,

alienated by religious discrimination in their home countries, through “careful and abstemious living,” “work their way towards the ultimate establishment of a mercantile business of their own.” The narrative of the self-made man is extended to civilizing discourses, as he goes on to argue that the development of agriculture in California can be “attributed to these intrepid souls.” Even though he romanticizes the pioneer farmer, by “agriculture,” he means modernized industrial agriculture: the development of irrigation, high-yield singular crops like wheat and barley, and hydroelectric power. Newman claims,

they were intelligent, hardy and enterprising men, who came to this vast undeveloped state. They sensed the opportunity to create for themselves a home in a nation of which they could become an integral part ... with the firm conviction that there they could ... assimilate themselves as permanent citizens of this land of freedom.<sup>40</sup>

By claiming that land was accumulated “from savings derived from mercantile ventures” and that “only through frugal living was this progress possible,” Newman’s history of Jewish agriculture in California sanitizes the highly exploitative financial system that built San Francisco’s wealth. The second half of the section on agriculture traces families, not individuals: the owning class that inherited wealth from this financial system. “Democracy” in this narrative is another name for capitalist accumulation. The kind of belonging that the ACJ offers, in this instance, is primarily economic. But rather than yet more evidence of the out-of-touch Jewish elite, Newman’s essay mirrors the Zionist narrative of “making the desert bloom.” He describes the early agricultural entrepreneurs as resisting the warnings of friends “who derided the acquisition of what seemed to be nothing more than desert or semi-arid lands,” instead modernizing and civilizing them. The Native inhabitants of the land are unspoken, and land acquisition is an extension of the cleverness of the migrants, not a result of the genocide and colonial ideology that constituted the American expansionist project. Indigenous people, Chinese “coolies,” and black slaves are the unspoken foil of “the Jew” in this scenario.

In the mythology of early Zionism, “making the desert bloom” operated to legitimize the Jewish settlement of Palestine. The quote itself is often attributed to David Ben Gurion, the first prime minister of Israel, but it shows up in various posters and other texts from the Jewish National Fund in the decades before the establishment of the state.<sup>41</sup> Either way, “making the desert bloom” was one of the first kinds of public relations projects taken up by the State of Israel, in an “attempt to convince world opinion that the country was a virtually uninhabited desert” or, if there was mention of the Arab inhabitants, “the Zionists emphasized the technical superiority of their agriculture to that of the native farmers.”<sup>42</sup> Although Newman never uses the phrase, the sentence “making the desert bloom” operates metaphorically to connect the practices of agriculture,

“development” and “civilizing” the land. Newman uses agricultural technological innovation and environmental exploitation to justify Jewish belonging in California, echoing the ways Zionists laid claim to Palestine.

The populist Zionist myth of the *kibbutz* as a socialist, agricultural utopia is upended in Nahum Karlinsky's “California Dreaming: Adapting the ‘California Model’ to the Jewish Citrus Industry in Palestine, 1917–1939.” Karlinsky shows that the capitalist, entrepreneurial connections between early Zionist settlements and California were materialized through the modeling of agricultural innovations between early Zionist settlers and California agribusiness. Karlinsky disrupts the underlying socialist or collectivist mythology of “making the desert bloom” by pointing to the ways most pioneer-farmers never worked the land but were instead bourgeois growers who “sought a profit-earning model applicable to their private farms.”<sup>43</sup> The model they found was a “technologically advanced, free-enterprise agricultural system” that Karlinsky calls “the California model,” since it was based on extremely successful California citrus agribusiness. The importance of the private sector for the success of Zionism, Karlinsky points out, has been deeply undertheorized. In this light, we cannot think of anti-Zionism and Zionism as oppositional, but dialectically co-constitutive of each other. Both are engaging in racial capitalist frameworks for understanding the value of Jews in a rapidly changing global order. For example, when the ACJ charged the Israeli state with dividing the loyalty of American Jews and “intervening in [their] internal affairs” in the fall of 1949, the American Jewish Committee asked for “clarification” from Israeli Prime Minister David Ben Gurion's office.<sup>44</sup> The Prime Minister himself sent a message in response, reprinted in *The Jewish Community Bulletin*, clarifying that Israel did not want US Jews to emigrate to Israel en masse, but instead asking for American “experts” to “assist us in perfecting our professional standards and improving our work methods” and to “teach us to exploit the perfected techniques ... which have made America the technological leader of the world.”<sup>45</sup> In his message, Ben Gurion draws parallels between US and Israeli settler colonialism:

One hundred and eighty years ago America was undeveloped, with a population of 3,000,000 and settled only in small part. The miraculous building of America is in large part the fruit of the daring initiative of generations of pioneers who, by courage, spirit, adventure and constructive genius, conquered deserts and wilderness, opened up empty stretches to millions of oppressed refugees from European countries and developed the most fruitful economy and the highest productive capacity in the entire world.

I venture to express the hope that Israel pioneers have no call to be ashamed before the pioneers who built the great America.<sup>46</sup>

In this way, Zionist pioneer narratives situate themselves in relation to US narratives of the West, which are in turn used by anti-Zionists to legitimize Jewish belonging in the United States. With Ben Gurion's explanation, the American Jewish Committee asked the ACJ to "desist from additional publicity in the general press" in order to maintain "good relationships with the non-Jewish community," showing that the anxiety around belonging was one shared by Zionists, non-Zionists, and anti-Zionists alike.<sup>47</sup>

### **A Normal Jewish Life: Cosmopolitanism and Belonging**

While participation in US capitalist democracy clearly undergirds much of the framework for the American Council for Judaism's San Francisco chapter, they defined their opposition to Zionism as a part of a newly emergent cosmopolitan, postwar world order. Cosmopolitanism, not Zionism, was the solution to the horrors of the Holocaust. The Holocaust presented a crisis in the West's understanding of itself and, by extension, a crisis of modernity.<sup>48</sup> The genocidal practices of Nazi Germany were an outgrowth of modern, efficient assembly line systems, the streamlining and industrializing of work, and an ideological fetishization of scientific truth. The Final Solution to "the Jewish problem" was the extreme revelation, showcasing the underbelly of the utopic Modernist ideal. Cosmopolitanism, and in particular the Kantian proposal for international law and perpetual peace, emerged as a solution to this crisis, as a way "out" of this problem. From a policy standpoint, then, the ACJ's anti-Zionism worked to insert American Jews into an "egalitarian" global world order. But the resurgence of cosmopolitan law in the 1940s was not a bid to end war but instead a shift toward US global ascendancy.

The San Francisco chapter of the ACJ regarded Zionism as a self-destructive reaction to the trauma of the Holocaust. One of the ways they attempted to fashion a mythology for American Jewish life was by utilizing the language of "normalcy" and by claiming that Zionism impedes the fulfillment of a normal Jewish American identity. Although some historians read this impulse as assimilationist, I argue that both the SF-ACJ and American Zionism were interested in Jewish normalcy.<sup>49</sup> Although the psychoanalytic focus on deviance and abnormality led to pathological assessments of "deviant sexualities," for Freud, normalcy was a delicate, precarious condition that operated more like a Platonic ideal rather than as the natural development of psychic life. Normalcy within psychoanalysis is not a "self-evident fact" but rather a "problem that needs elucidating."<sup>50</sup>

In an address to the SF-ACJ on December 13, 1949, Rabbi Morris S. Lazaron argued the Freudian "death fixation" undergirds Zionism and reads Zionism as an interruption of the development of a normal Jewish identity. He defines Zionism as a prescription for Jewish identity that claims that Palestine is the only place where a Jew can lead a "normal Jewish life."<sup>51</sup> Further, Zionism claims that the psychological and emotional existence of Judaism relies on

a relationship to the State of Israel, and that Jews need a psychological attachment to the State of Israel in order to have proper "self-respect." Lazaron rejects Zionism as "alien to the Jewish mind," as an "abnormality." He asks: "What happens to an individual when his mind is constantly harassed by fear of death? The normal mind lives without fear of death. It is the sick mind which broods upon the fear of not surviving. The Jewish masses are sick!"<sup>52</sup>

Rather than see Zionism as rescuing the Jewish people from persecution, Lazaron sees the trauma of the Holocaust as producing Jewish nationalism and therefore as an unhealthy fixation on death. The trauma itself is not limited to the slaughter but also stems from the "inability" or "apparent indifference" of the world to the genocide of Jews in Nazi-occupied Europe. As a result, the American Jew would be psychologically isolated from other Americans.<sup>53</sup> Lazaron is hopeful, claiming that he believes the Jew is able to "live a normal life outside of Israel" and that anti-Semitism is not "an incurable disease." He points to the "greatness" of Jewish literature outside Palestine and argues that to deny this cultural history by adhering to Zionism is to confess to Jewish "weakness."<sup>54</sup>

Lazaron sees far-reaching consequences to the emotional and cultural identification with Israel, in particular for American Jewish children. He warns of "instability, discontent and lack of inner harmony" that "may well develop [into a] psychic disorder." Rather than a national home, the diasporic relationship to Israel will deny American children their "true" roots and release "repressive influences" in American Jewish life.<sup>55</sup> The desire for a normal Jewish life is, as Daniel Boyarin points out, itself a reaction to the Nazi claim of Jewish degeneracy.<sup>56</sup> The definition of normalcy, in this case, is a life without fear of persecution and the ability to fulfill the cultural requirements of American citizenship. Instead of assimilating into the ideal of a militarized Jewish nation-state, based on the nineteenth-century nationalisms, Lazaron advocates for a normal *American* life.

Lazaron offers the individual freedom of democratic capitalism as a defense against the communal kinds of attachment that nationalisms demand. At times, his warnings against Zionism mirror the Cold War discourses of American nationalism that were beginning to color the culture of United States. Lazaron invokes the specter of "hundreds of Jewish youth" that, after training in Israel, will "indoctrinate, propagandize, evoke emotional responses and develop psychological ties to Israel."<sup>57</sup> The imagery of a far-reaching and well-organized Zionist project mimics the anxiety that the threat of the Soviet Union would take on in the decades to come. This is no accident; for the SF-ACJ, Zionism represented a kind of communal identity that was antithetical to US capitalist democracy. The American conception of religion is a key element here, in that the right to an individual's *private* religion represents individual autonomy. The analysis of "sickness" through the trauma of the Holocaust also marks Germany as a place where individual autonomy was subsumed under a toxic nationalism. Lazaron sees diasporic nationalisms as antithetical to the United



States. He argues that these kind of communal identities would be the undoing of “democratic America,” asking his audience to imagine what would happen if every minority group thought as Zionists do. The United States would then be “fragmented” into “hypersensitive” groups that would “desperately [attempt] to preserve their various identities.”<sup>58</sup> If US Jews were emotionally tied to the State of Israel, they would be “drawn into its international dilemmas.” Instead, Lazonon sees cosmopolitanism as the obvious solution, since any group’s survival “depends upon the survival of freedom and democracy in every corner of the world” and “unless all citizens of all nations unite to secure these blessings for all they will be safe for none.”<sup>59</sup>

This turn to cosmopolitanism in Lazonon’s speech was not a call for some kind of international solidarity after the Holocaust, or even for international law, but is another indicator of the ACJ’s commitment to global capitalism and American ascendancy. As Michel Foucault’s *Birth of Biopolitics* points out, cosmopolitanism discursively marks a larger shift within world systems where market and corporate forces dominate over state and national ones. In his close reading of Kant’s *Perpetual Peace*, Foucault points out that the guarantee of “perpetual peace” is not “men’s will” or “mutual understanding,” nor is it the “political and diplomatic devices,” but nature.<sup>60</sup> According to Kant, in order to survive, people must have social organization, produce food, and as Foucault emphasizes, “exchange their products,” since “nature intended the entire world, the whole of its surface, to be given over to the economic activity of production and exchange.”<sup>61</sup> In other words, for Kant, cosmopolitan law has its foundations in nature because cosmopolitanism is rooted in capitalism. Nature is what allows humans to create “juridical obligations,” grounded in individual relations of exchange and supported by property. Subsequently, “the guarantee of perpetual peace is therefore actually commercial globalization.”<sup>62</sup>

I turn to Foucault’s connection between cosmopolitanism and commercial globalization to explain how the ACJ was a product of—while simultaneously producing—a capitalist racial order emerging in the United States. Jodi Melamed argues that in order to “successfully define the terms of global governance after World War II, US bourgeoisie classes had to manage the racial contradictions that antiracist and anticolonial movements exposed.”<sup>63</sup> Racial liberalism emerged as a key discourse that set up the groundwork for later iterations of racial capitalism. For Melamed, at its core was a geopolitical race narrative: the integration of African Americans into the United States, “defined through a liberal framework of legal rights and racially inclusive nationalism, would establish the moral legitimacy of US global leadership.”<sup>64</sup> In other words, the United States was engaged in a kind of branding campaign in order to compete ideologically with the Soviet Union. Melamed’s argument locates race in the bodies of African Americans, but I would argue that the narrative of a “racially inclusive nationalism” found its precursor in the ways Jews participated in and were incorporated into US capitalist democracy. Later iterations of multiculturalism and official antiracisms would retroactively situate Jews in the role of

“model minority,” as the first to fully assimilate into US culture, evidenced by their economic success.<sup>65</sup> Melamed argues that these official antiracisms “produced and policed acceptable racial meanings in terms that prioritized individual over collective rights and property rights over social goals and depoliticized economic arrangements.”<sup>66</sup> Melamed’s description of racial liberalism glosses over the importance of the Holocaust as a precursor to this new racial order; she establishes the Holocaust as the instigator of a new geopolitics but her focus is elsewhere. The ACJ’s articulation of the role of Jews in US capitalist democracy, and in turn, the role of the US internationally, produces the alternative to Zionism as cosmopolitanism: a continuation of the transnational capitalism of the United States. Further, the ACJ posited that the United States was the moral and logical alternative to Israel for the refugees of the Holocaust. What would establish the “moral legitimacy of US global leadership” was in part the ways the ACJ, among many others, articulated the United States as *not* Germany, that is, not experiencing a crisis of modernity. The ACJ’s articulation of the role of Jews in US capitalist democracy, and in turn, the role of the US internationally, produces the international dominance of the United States as the alternative to Zionism.

### **Zionism and the Question of Jewish Assimilation**

While the State of Israel operated—and continues to operate—as a colonial power, Zionism articulated itself as an ideology of *de*-colonization and national liberation. If Zionism is a movement of Jewish self-determination, then Lazonby’s speech is clear evidence of Jewish assimilation. However, defining Zionism as a popular liberation movement ignores the ways it assimilated into Western narratives of proper masculinity, imperial state structures, and transnational capitalism. The work of Jewish historiographers David Biale and Daniel Boyarin show that even the earliest forms of Zionism were deeply assimilationist and that American Zionism continued to argue for Zionism’s relevance in American life precisely because it would make American Jews better Americans.<sup>67</sup> Both Biale and Boyarin look to the refashioning of Jewish masculinity and sexuality as the grounds for the Zionist interpellation of Judaism. David Biale’s groundbreaking *Eros and the Jews* argues that Zionism’s mythology promised “a utopian movement of erotic liberation.”<sup>68</sup> According to Biale, Zionism claimed “that the Jews lived a disembodied existence in exile and that only a healthy national life could restore a necessary measure of physicality and materiality.”<sup>69</sup> Zionism sought to transform individual Jewish bodies, and in particular sexual bodies, through a physical “rooting” to the soil. This Zionism was a secular, modernizing project, most clearly outlined in the writings of Hungarian thinker Max Nordeau, who famously summed up the Jewish problem thusly: “Jews must become men of muscles rather than slaves to their nerves.”<sup>70</sup> This new image of the Jewish body included the image of a strong,

muscular, soldier-pioneer as the ideal for Jewish masculinity, and an equally strong, sexualized mother as the ideal for Jewish femininity.

According to Daniel Boyarin's *Unheroic Conduct*, the muscular soldier-pioneer is a reaction to the Talmudic tradition of effeminate Jewish masculinity. He claims that psychoanalysis and Zionism were two specifically Jewish answers to "the rise of heterosexuality."<sup>71</sup> Drawing from queer theories that argue that heterosexuality relies on and is constituted by homophobia, and in particular violent disavowal of homosexuality, Boyarin looks at the Talmudic practices of male intimacy and argues that such practices bespeak "a lack of 'homosexual panic.'"<sup>72</sup> In turn, these practices permitted a much greater scope of behavior coded as feminine.<sup>73</sup> Although "this kinder, gentler form of patriarchy may have solidified certain kinds of male power," Rabbinical Jewish masculinity was one without a heterosexuality that defined itself against homosexuality.<sup>74</sup> This order of things changed through the rise of heterosexuality and nationalism in the nineteenth century. According to Boyarin, "Zionism is truly the most profound sort of assimilationism," the gateway to normative masculinity and national military power. Zionism was considered to be a cure for Jewish gendering, not just a solution to economic and political problems.

The argument for Zionism as an assimilationist project is essential to understanding the project of the American Council for Judaism. As Boyarin points out, even today the argument for Zionism is one of a "will to power in the face of oppression" or as an anti-assimilationist "nativism not entirely unlike the negritude movement."<sup>75</sup> On the other hand, contemporary anti-Zionists see Zionism as "plain colonialism, a mere undiluted extension of European practices." Boyarin wants to argue for something else, a "peculiar interstitial position" that Zionism took up, which ended up being essentially a project to civilize Jewish men in what Boyarin calls "colonial drag," mimicking the Aryan ideal of a muscular, powerful soldier. As Boyarin states: "To find a way to preserve Jewish difference in a creative, vital manner was never in the program at all, not in the beginning nor at the end. The scheme was ever to find a way for Jews to assume their proper status as proud, manly, warlike people—just like everybody else."<sup>76</sup>

Zionism's assimilationist project was not limited to Herzl's political Zionism in Europe but was also an integral part of American Zionism. In the *Emanuel* and the *Jewish Journal's* December 18, 1942 issue, amid advertisements for Christmas trees and gifts, Dorothy Thompson argues precisely for the assimilation of American Jews through Zionism. "Jewish life must be normalized," she maintains, and since Jews "plainly have a national existence and a national cohesion," the solution is for Jews to have "a land of their own." She also contends that "in fact, were their nationhood recognized and made corporeal on soil, as is the nationhood of all other peoples, the process of assimilation would ... proceed much more swiftly."<sup>77</sup>

Much later, Yitzhak Rabin, in a paper presented to the World Zionist Organization in 1970, echoes Thompson's argument. Titled "American Jews and Israel: Strengthening the Bonds," his paper argues that the production of a Jewish

diasporic citizenship in Western countries becomes possible precisely because of the State of Israel.<sup>78</sup> Rabin claims, “anti-Semitism exists everywhere, but the American people lacks that tendency towards national uniformity which characterizes other nations.”<sup>79</sup> In other words, Jews are more easily assimilated into the United States because of, again, the “unprecedented degree of freedom” in the United States. For Rabin, this has the benefit of creating a community outside Israel that can easily support the state financially and culturally. He argues that the establishment of the State of Israel will nonetheless reduce anti-Semitism in the United States in several ways. He tells an anecdote of a conversation with a US Air Force colonel. The colonel states that as a person raised in the American South, he was taught to dislike Jews because they “did not fit into my conception of ‘American.’”<sup>80</sup> Interestingly, the “conception of America” was as “a land of immigrants,” and since “the Jew” did not have a country of origin, “he could not fit into the nature of Americans.”<sup>81</sup> The colonel remarks that with the establishment of the state of Israel, the “American Jew is an American in every respect.”<sup>82</sup> Rather than seeing Israel as an action against assimilation into the United States, what the formation of the state did was actually allow Jews to have access to US normalcy.<sup>83</sup>

### **The Legacy of the American Council for Judaism**

To call the ACJ assimilationist is to ignore their political project, which was ultimately not directed at the United States or the Gentile world, but at an impenetrable dominance by Zionism within American Judaism, where Zionists began to speak for all Jews, and where Jewish identity became centered on space—the State of Israel—rather than time—the rituals and practices of Judaism.<sup>84</sup> The American Council for Judaism is not an anomaly in Jewish history in the United States, but is a group that mirrors US American ideals about capitalism, democracy, and belonging. Both the ACJ and the American Zionist movement saw the Jews of San Francisco as exemplary capitalists and inserted American Jewishness into a racial capitalism that ensured the dominance of the United States.

Examining the discourses of the first few years of the ACJ's existence in San Francisco, one is immediately aware of two developing narratives of Jewish identity in the United States. The first narrative is the creation of a diasporic Zionist-American identity based on financial support of the State of Israel, while the second narrative imagines that diaspora as a threat to the very nation it supposedly supports. For normative understandings of the Jewish diaspora, Israel constitutes a return to the homeland, and the end of homelessness, powerlessness, and ultimately, the end of anti-Semitism.<sup>85</sup> The state of Israel offers refuge to Jews persecuted for their religion in the diaspora, Jews usually described as living in “the East.”<sup>86</sup> At the same time, Israel is also figured as saving “Western” Jews from the dangers of assimilation in “affluent” countries, Jews who are otherwise deemed “safe.”<sup>87</sup> In other words, Jews from the “East”

are seen as endangered through anti-Semitism, while Jews in Europe, Canada, and the United States are in danger because of assimilation. Conventional theological renderings of the Jewish diaspora describe Jews as “the chosen people,” chosen particularly to suffer in the diaspora and to redemptively return home. Through the American Council for Judaism’s insistence on an *American Judaism*, however, we see that the “return home” was far from self-evident for many American Jews. In fact, for Rabbi Lazaron, Zionism produced “a new role for the Jew,” who was not used to being “suddenly preoccupied with his own survival.”<sup>88</sup> Ultimately, that condition of homelessness was created, rather than solved, by Zionism.

The ACJ needed to offer a compelling counter mythology to the one of Zionist liberation, and for the most part, they settled on a cosmopolitan, capitalist, American masculinity with a private religious life that happened to be Jewish. In many ways, the ACJ’s ideas about Jewish American masculinity did not challenge Zionism’s attempt to create “Jews with muscles,” even as the organization defined Zionism as toxic to a normal Jewish life. The San Francisco chapter, in particular, emphasized a cosmopolitan, land-owning masculinity coupled with a muscular Judaism reminiscent of Zionism’s, except their ideal citizen was an entrepreneur, civilizing California’s fertile lands. As a result, they never disrupted the growing American global ascendancy that would color the postwar period, and their critiques of Zionism could only be limited to Jewish life in the United States.

## Notes

I would like to thank the three anonymous readers for *AMSJ: American Studies Journal*, whose generous critiques were invaluable to this article’s coherency.

1. *California Dreaming: Jewish Life in the Bay Area from the Gold Rush to the Present*, San Francisco, Contemporary Jewish Museum: November 17, 2011–October 16, 2012.

2. *Ibid.*

3. David Biale, *Eros and the Jews: From Biblical Israel to Contemporary America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); Daniel Boyarin, *Unheroic Conduct: The Rise of Heterosexuality and the Invention of the Jewish Man* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); Raz Yosef, *Beyond Flesh: Queer Masculinities and Nationalism in Israeli Cinema* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2004); Todd Samuel Presner, *Muscular Judaism: The Jewish Body and the Politics of Regeneration* (New York: Routledge, 2007).

4. Thomas Kolsky, *Jews against Zionism: The American Council for Judaism, 1942–1948* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992), 38.

5. *Ibid.*, 42.

6. “The Pittsburgh Platform,” CCAR: The Central Conference of American Rabbis, <http://ccarnet.org/rabbis-speak/platforms/declaration-principles/>.

7. Kolsky, *Jews against Zionism*, 24.

8. *Ibid.*, 71; American Council for Judaism, *Information Bulletin* (December 15 1943).

9. *Ibid.* The distinction between being anti-Zionist and being against the State of Israel is clearly articulated in a 1946 speech by Rabbi Irving Reichert, given at the Commonwealth Club in San Francisco. From 1930 to 1948, Rabbi Reichert led Temple Emanu-El, arguably the oldest synagogue in San Francisco. He was also the Western Regional President of the ACJ. Reichert calls Palestine the most “promising solution” to the stateless Jews of Europe in 1946. He claims that “millions of the Jews in America reject the political philosophy of Zionism,” but that every Jew “heartily support[s] and encourage[s] to the fullest the widest possible immigration of Jewish

refugees into Palestine" (Irving Reichert, "Jews and the World Today," in *Vital Speeches of the Day, 1945–1946*, 436).

10. Fred Rosenbaum, *Cosmopolitans: A Social and Cultural History of the Jews in the San Francisco Bay Area* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 45.

11. The stained glass, by artist Emilie Pessis, was re-created by in the Contemporary Jewish museum in their *California Dreaming* exhibit, November 2011–October 2012.

12. "New Group opposes Jewish State," *New York Times*, November 9, 1943.

13. Kate Shvetsky, "San Francisco Jewish Elite: America's Leading Anti-Zionists," *Found SF* (1997).

14. "New Group Opposes Jewish State," *New York Times*, November 9, 1943.

15. He concluded his letter by stating "This is not the first time that such groups have appeared. It is an old, old, story. The great Anglo-Jewish writer Israel Zangwill already had a name for them: the Grand Moguls of Judaism" (Magnes Collection of Jewish Art and Life, American Council for Judaism collection, Box 1:3, Bancroft Library, Berkeley, CA.)

16. Paul Ucker, Letter to the Editor, *San Francisco Chronicle*, November 18, 1943 (Magnes Collection of Jewish Art and Life, American Council for Judaism collection, Box 1:3, Bancroft Library, Berkeley, CA.)

17. The story of San Francisco is one of the familiar narratives of "bootstraps" capitalist success: the discovery of gold in 1848 led to unprecedented growth as thousands of men, and a few women, made their way out west in search of a quick buck. The story of the Gold Rush is often told from the perspective of the prospector, the individual whose move West resulted either in fortune or devastating loss. However, as Gray Brechin's *Imperial San Francisco* argues, the story of San Francisco is that of the financiers, the bankers, and the owning classes that shaped the city and the surrounding states. Brechin traces the ways mining in Nevada, fur trade in Alaska, sugar production in Hawaii, and agriculture all along the southern Pacific Rim were all financially centered in San Francisco, making San Francisco an imperial metropole. As the financial capital of the West, the completely unregulated economy concentrated incredible amounts of wealth in San Francisco while allowing for massive economic and environmental exploitation outside it. Brechin compares this imperial relationship to the one Rome had with its surrounding territories. Gray Brechin, *Imperial San Francisco: Urban Power, Earthly Ruin* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006).

18. See Dan Lainer-Vos, *Sinews of the Nation: Constructing Irish and Zionist Bonds in the United States* (Malden: Polity Press, 2013), and Melvin Urofsky, *American Zionism from Herzl to the Holocaust* (New York: Doubleday, 1975).

19. *The Jewish Community Bulletin*, May 7, 1948. Accessed via the Stanford University Green Library Microform Collection.

20. *The Jewish Community Bulletin*, April 30, 1948, April 3, 1948, and March 19, 1948 respectively. The outstretched hand imagery calls upon the Passover Seder, where God leads Israel to the promised land "with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm." Accessed via the Stanford University Green Library Microform Collection.

21. June 17, 1949, *The Jewish Community Bulletin*. Accessed via the Stanford University Green Library Microform Collection.

22. *Ibid.*

23. *The Jewish Community Bulletin*, June 17, 1949. Accessed via the Stanford University Green Library Microform Collection.

24. *The Jewish Community Bulletin*, July 8, 1949. Accessed via the Stanford University Green Library Microform Collection.

25. David H. Shapiro, *From Philanthropy to Activism: The Political Transformation of American Zionism in the Holocaust Years, 1933–1945* (New York: Pergamon, 1994), 3.

26. Haym Salomon was one of the primary financiers of the American Revolution. See S. Rezneck, *Unrecognized Patriots: The Jews in the American Revolution* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1975).

27. United Jewish Appeal, "After Seven Hours . . .," advertisement, *The Jewish Community Bulletin*, April 30, 1948: 3. Accessed via the Stanford University Green Library Microform Collection. Although three decades would pass before the first Palestinian *intifada*, the use of stone-throwing boys to symbolize both innocence and desperation points to the beginnings of a particular kind of militarized masculinity that is deeply embedded in the cultural life of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the Occupation.

28. Jodi Melamed, *Represent and Destroy: Rationalizing Violence in the New Racial Capitalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), 10.

29. *Ibid.*, 7.

30. While there is no mention of other minority groups in the SF-ACJ's literature in this period, one could see the treatment of Japanese-Americans in California as a backdrop to the ACJ's politics. The enforced incarceration of American citizens of Japanese descent as "hostile aliens" may have prompted a fear that Jews could be also designated as a foreign threat.

31. Melamed, *Represent and Destroy*, 10.



32. The Zionists in the Bay Area were generally affiliated with progressive movements. There were explicitly socialist-Zionist settlements in the Bay Area, in particular in Petaluma. Additionally, throughout the 1940s, Zionism's associations with a foreign country led the FBI to investigate the Zionist Organization of America as a potential threat, an investigation that was prompted by letters to the State Department by the New York chapter of the ACJ. However, investigations were more or less concluded by 1952, and the connections between Zionism and socialism were not mentioned in the available FBI file. For more information, see the FBI report "New Zionist Organization" made available under the Freedom of Information Act.

33. Amy Kaplan, *Anarchy of Empire in the Making of US Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002).

34. *Ibid.*, 6.

35. *Ibid.*, 12.

36. The association of California with the frontier would also cement California as a space of "freedom," both social and economic.

37. The American Council for Judaism, *American Council for Judaism Participates in the Celebration of the California Centennial on Washington's Birthday, February 22, 1949*, Stanford Green Library Microform Collection.

38. Melamed, *Represent and Destroy*, xi.

39. *Ibid.*, 7.

40. S. Walter Newman, "On Agriculture," in *American Council for Judaism Participates in the Celebration of the California Centennial on Washington's Birthday, February 22, 1949*, Stanford Green Library Microform Collection, 3.

41. See *The Palestine Poster Project Archives*, Liberation Graphics, [www.palestineposter-project.org](http://www.palestineposter-project.org).

42. Alan George, "Making the Desert Bloom: An Introduction to a Myth," *Journal of Palestinian Studies* 8 (1979): 88–100.

43. Nahum Karlinsky, "California Dreaming: Adapting the 'California Model' to the Jewish Citrus Industry in Palestine, 1917–1939," *Israel Studies* 5 (2000): 24–40.

44. "American Jewish Committee asks all Groups to Stop Public Controversy," *The Jewish Community Bulletin* (November 4, 1949). Stanford Green Library Microform Collection.

45. *Ibid.*

46. *Ibid.*

47. *Ibid.*

48. Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001).

49. Boyarin, *Unheroic Conduct*, 189.

50. Sigmund Freud, *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, 12 n. 1. For further discussion about the precariousness of normality in psychoanalysis, see the work of Ann Pellegrini, Judith Butler, and Elizabeth Grosz.

51. Morris Lazaron, "Dare We Be Neutral? An address to the San Francisco Chapter of the American Council for Judaism," December 13, 1949, Stanford Green Library Microform Collection.

52. *Ibid.*, 4.

53. *Ibid.*

54. *Ibid.*, 5.

55. *Ibid.*, 12.

56. Boyarin, *Unheroic Conduct*, 3.

57. *Ibid.*, 7.

58. *Ibid.*, 8.

59. *Ibid.*, 13.

60. Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978–1979* (New York: Picador, 2010), 57.

61. *Ibid.*, 57–58.

62. *Ibid.*

63. Melamed, *Represent and Destroy*, 53.

64. *Ibid.*

65. For an analysis of the "model minority" myth and its impacts on racialization in the United States, see Lisa Lowe, "Heterogeneity, Hybridity, Multiplicity: Marking Asian American Differences," *Diaspora* 1 (1991): 24–44, and David L. Eng's *Racial Castration: Managing Masculinity in Asian America* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001).

66. *Ibid.*, 55.

67. A sentiment expressed as early as 1915 by Louis Brandies, who stated that "Every American Jew who aids in advancing the Jewish settlement in Palestine, though he feels that neither he nor his descendants will ever live there, will likewise be a better man and a better American for doing so. There is no inconsistency between loyalty to America and loyalty to Jewry." Louis Brandies,



"The Jewish Problem: How to Solve It," Speech given at a Conference of Eastern Council of Reform Rabbis, April 25, 1915, <http://www.law.louisville.edu/library/collections/brandeis/node/234>.

68. Biale, *Eros and the Jews*, 177.

69. Ibid.

70. Ibid., 179.

71. Boyarin is extremely careful to account for the diversity of Zionisms, stating, "even my most trenchant comments upon and interpretations of Herzlian Zionism could be countered by referring to other Zionisms. There were even movements calling themselves Zionism that would today be called *antizionism*, such as those that called for a completely secular binational state in Palestine for Jews and Palestinians together, the stated program of the left wing of the Palestine Liberation Organization, as well as of Israeli Jewish anti-Zionists in Matzpen, among whose number I count myself" Boyarin, *Unheroic Conduct*, 272 n. 3.

72. Ibid., 17.

73. Ibid.

74. Ibid.

75. Ibid., 277.

76. Ibid., 281.

77. Dorothy Thompson, "Towards a Solution," *Emanu-El and the Jewish Journal* (December 18, 1942), Stanford Green Library Microform Collection.

78. Yitzchak Rabin, "American Jews and Israel: Strengthening the Bonds," in *Diaspora: Exile and the Jewish Condition*, ed. Etan Levine (New York: J. Aronson, 1983).

79. Ibid., 213.

80. Ibid., 214.

81. Ibid. It is telling that this definition of "American" would necessarily exclude indigenous people.

82. Ibid.

83. This process of entering whiteness has been discussed at length in Karen Brodtkin's *How Jews Became White Folks*, which argues that Jewishness became constructed as a model minority as a part of a larger American racial discourse in which whiteness, to understand itself, depends upon an invented and contrasting blackness as its "evil twin." Karen Brodtkin, *How Jews Became White Folks & What That Says about Race in America* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2002), 151.

84. Etan Levine, "Jews in Time and Space," in *Diaspora: Exile and the Jewish Condition*, ed. Etan Levine (New York: J. Aronson, 1983), 4.

85. Rabin, "American Jews and Israel," 213; Golda Meir, "Zionism and the Jews," in *Diaspora: Exile and the Jewish Condition* ed. Etan Levine (New York: J. Aronson, 1983), 221.

86. Rabin "American Jews and Israel," 213.

87. Ibid.

88. Lazaron, "Dare We Be Neutral?" 13.